



Title III Initiatives and Outcomes at the University of Bridgeport

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Title III Purpose

The purpose of the Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP), authorized by Title III, Part A of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA), 20 USC 1057-1059d, is to “provide grants to eligible institutions of higher education (IHEs) to help them become self sufficient and expand their capacity to serve low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen their academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability” (USDE, 2014). Awards are highly competitive, and grant applications are rigorously reviewed.

Goals

In its application for Title III funding, the University of Bridgeport noted six key goals, which were derived from its Institutional Strategic Plan, the 2004 Self-Study Report (including NEASC responses), and the findings of the university’s Retention Committee at that time. The identified goals were as follows:

Academic Program Goals:

- Increase the percentage of students who persist from first to second year.
- Increase the percentage of students who pass developmental Math and English with a “C” or better and transition into college-level courses.
- Increase the percentage of full-time and adjunct faculty who participate in training and thereby increase their use of instructional technology in the classroom.
- Increase the number of classrooms and student study areas updated with current technology.

Institutional Management Goal:

- Integrate enhanced technology for: (a) Retention Alert with web-based student information “Web-Advisor” to improve academic success and retention, and (b) implement the online registration functionality of Web-Advisor.

Fiscal Stability Goal:

- Strengthen financial stability by improving persistence to graduation rates.

Title III Project: 2008 - 2013

The successful completion of the five-year Title III grant at the University of Bridgeport resulted in the achievement of its measureable objectives, making a positive impact on the university’s capacity to fulfill the goals of the Title III legislation. The Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), established as a part of the University of Bridgeport’s Title III project, created opportunities for faculty professional development, enhanced the university’s technology infrastructure, and focused attention on increasing student success and retention.

Objective #1: By September 30, 2013, increase the retention rate by 10% from 48.65% to 58.65%.

The final 63.79% retention rate surpassed the objective by 5.14%. The University met this Title III retention objective through a combination of project-related activities, as well as University efforts to increase retention, including the work of its retention specialists and the implementation of *Retention Alert*, its early warning system procured through Title III. (This objective also relates to the Fiscal Stability Goal.) The CELT Professional Development Program provided faculty forums for discussion about retention, and the Scholar-in-Residence program (awarded to faculty conducting research about learning, teaching, and retention) provided additional impetus to improve the retention rate.

Objective #2a: By September 30, 2013, increase the percentage of students who successfully complete developmental math (achieving a grade of “C” or better) from 32% (Fall 2007) to 42% (Fall 2012).

The Year 5 percentage of the Fall 2012 cohort of students passing developmental math was 72.03%, surpassing the objective by 30.03%.

Objective #2b: By September 30, 2013, increase the percentage of students who successfully complete developmental English from 70% (Fall 2007) to 80% (Fall 2012) in English.

The Year 5 percentage of the Fall 2012 cohort of students passing developmental English was 80.75%, indicating that the final objective was met. Thus, the objectives to increase the passing rates of students in developmental courses were met.

Objective #3: By September 30, 2013, 54 full-time and 36 adjunct undergraduate faculty will have completed twelve (12) hours of professional development through workshops in the CELT from 0 (Fall 2008) to 94% full time faculty and 17% adjuncts (Fall 2013).

This goal was not only met but surpassed in that 55 full-time and 39 adjunct undergraduate faculty completed a minimum of fifteen (15) hours of professional development each year, bringing the final number to ninety-four (94) cohort faculty. These faculty members participated in cross-campus learning communities and examined best practices in college learning and teaching, new technologies for college classrooms, and strategies for improving campus retention, including Retention Alert. The CELT program included workshops, guest speaker presentations, summer institutes, and focused tutorials. Additional non-cohort faculty and staff attended the CELT programs, and a total of 3,270 professional development hours were completed by all participants.

Objective #4: By September 30, 2013, increase the number of undergraduate classrooms and student study areas upgraded with standard technology from 2 (Fall 2008) to 36 (Fall 2013).

In the final phase of the Title III project this goal was not only met but surpassed. The total number of classrooms equipped through Title III funds with SMART technologies (such as SMARTboards and SMART LightRaise projection systems) was fifty (50). The objective of creating 2 additional student study areas was also met. Through Title III funds, six (6) new student study areas were created and equipped with technology. These six student study areas were strategically placed in the Student Center, classroom buildings, the library, and a college dormitory first-year achievement floor.

Conclusions

In sum, the Title III activities involved the collaborative and worthwhile efforts of full-time and part-time faculty, students, administrators, and staff in the University of Bridgeport community. The University showed substantive progress throughout the grant in meeting its objectives, and as a result, made significant contributions to the life of its professional and academic community in learning and teaching.